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ASSISTANCE IN MINE CLEARANCE

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The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 48/7 of 19 October 1993, 49/215 of 23 December 1994 and 50/82 of 14 December 1995 on assistance in mine clearance, all adopted without a vote,

Reaffirming its deep concern at the tremendous humanitarian problem caused by the presence of mines and other unexploded devices that have serious and lasting social and economic consequences for the populations of mine-infested countries and constitute an obstacle to the return of refugees and other displaced persons, to humanitarian aid operations and to reconstruction and economic development, as well as to the restoration of normal social conditions,

Reiterating its dismay at the high number of victims of mines, especially among civilian populations, particularly children, and recalling in this context Commission on Human Rights resolutions 1995/79 of 8 March 1995[1] and 1996/85 of

[1] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 3 and corrigenda (E/1995/23 and Corr.1 and 2), chap. II, sect. A.

24 April 1996[2] on the rights of the child and 1996/27 of 19 April 1996[3] on the human rights of persons with disability, and noting the recent report on the impact of armed conflict on children prepared by the expert of the Secretary-General,[1]

Deeply alarmed that the number of mines being laid each year, as well as the presence of a large number of mines and other unexploded devices as a result of armed conflicts, exponentially outweighs the number of such mines that can be cleared during that time, and thus convinced of the necessity and urgency of a significant increase in mine-clearance efforts by the international community,

Noting the recent decisions taken at the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects,[4] particularly with respect to the Convention's Protocol II and the inclusion in the Amended Protocol[5] of a number of provisions of importance for mine-clearance operations, notably the requirement of detectability,

Noting also the adoption at the Ottawa Conference: "Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines" on 5 October 1996 of the Ottawa Declaration,[6] whereby participants undertook a commitment towards the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines and which, among other things, recognizes that the international community must provide significantly greater resources to mine-awareness programmes, mine-clearance operations and victim assistance, and stressing the need to convince mine-affected States to halt new deployments of anti-personnel mines to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of mine-clearance operations, and noting the offer by the Government of Belgium to host a follow-on conference at Brussels in June 1997,

Welcoming the offer by the Government of Japan to host the Tokyo Conference on Anti-personnel Landmines in March 1997 with a view to reinforcing international support for the work of the United Nations in landmine clearance, development of new technology for landmine detection and removal and the rehabilitation of landmine victims,

Emphasizing the importance of recording the location of mines, of retaining all such records and making them available to concerned parties upon cessation

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[1] See E/1996/L.18; to be issued in final form in Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 3 (E/1996/23).

[2] A/51/306 and Add.1.

[3] CCW/CONF.I/16 (Part I).

[4] Ibid., annex B.

[5] A/C.1/51/10, annex I.

of hostilities, and welcoming the strengthening of the relevant provisions in international law,

Recognizing the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting mine clearance in affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby-traps,

Bearing in mind the serious threat that mines and other unexploded devices pose to the safety, health and lives of personnel participating in humanitarian, peacekeeping and rehabilitation programmes and operations,

Aware that the rate of mine clearance needs to accelerate substantially if the global landmine problem is to be tackled effectively,

Concerned about the limited availability of safe and cost-effective mine-detection and mine-clearance equipment as well as the lack of global coordination in research and development to improve the relevant technology, and conscious of the need to promote progress in this field and to foster international technical cooperation to this end,

Encouraged by the initiative taken by the Government of Denmark in hosting and organizing the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology at Elsinore from 2 to 4 July 1996[*] with the support and cooperation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and by the work of the Conference, notably in relation to international standards and procedures for humanitarian mine-clearance operations, which can serve as a basis on which to advance the safety, effectiveness and professionalism of these operations throughout the world,

Recognizing that, in addition to the primary role of States, the United Nations has an important role in the field of assistance in mine clearance,

Noting with satisfaction the inclusion in the mandates of several peacekeeping operations of provisions relating to mine-clearance work carried out under the direction of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, in the context of such operations,

Commending the activities already undertaken by the United Nations system, donor and recipient Governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations to coordinate their efforts and seek solutions to the problems related to the presence of mines and other unexploded devices,

Also commending the role of the Secretary-General, through the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in increasing public awareness of the problem of landmines, and in the establishment of the central landmine database and inventories of mine-awareness materials and mine-clearance techniques,

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[*] See A/51/472, annex.

Welcoming the statement by the President of the Security Council at the 3693rd meeting of the Council, on 30 August 1996, on demining in the context of United Nations peacekeeping,[8]

1. Expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the activities of the United Nations on assistance in mine clearance and the operation of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance,[9] and takes note with interest of the proposals contained therein;

2. Welcomes, in particular, the efforts made by the United Nations to foster the establishment of mine-clearance capacities in countries where mines constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the local population, and emphasizing the importance of developing national mine-clearance capacities, urges all Member States, particularly those that have a capacity to do so, to assist afflicted countries in the establishment and development of their national mine-clearance capacities;

3. Invites Member States to develop national programmes, in cooperation with the relevant bodies of the United Nations system where appropriate, to promote awareness of landmines, especially among children;

4. Expresses its appreciation to Member States and regional organizations for their financial contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, and appeals to them to continue this support through further contributions;

5. Encourages all relevant multilateral and national programmes and bodies to include, in coordination with the United Nations, activities related to mine clearance in their humanitarian, social and economic assistance activities;

6. Stresses the importance of international assistance for the rehabilitation of landmine victims and their full participation in society;

7. Emphasizes again, in this connection, the importance of effective coordination by the United Nations of activities related to mine clearance, including those by regional organizations, in particular activities related to standards, technological development, information and training;

8. Welcomes the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to coordinate mine-related activities and, in particular, the establishment, in cooperation with other relevant United Nations organizations, of comprehensive mine-action programmes, and encourages the Department to continue and enhance those efforts with a view to improving the effectiveness of assistance in mine clearance by the United Nations;

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[8] S/PRST/1996/37.

[9] A/51/540.

9. Welcomes the designation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the focal point in the United Nations for coordinating humanitarian demining and related issues, as the repository of information and for encouraging and facilitating international research to improve mine-clearance methods;

10. Urges Member States, regional organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations to continue to extend full assistance and cooperation to the Secretary-General and, in particular, to provide him with information and data as well as other appropriate resources that could be useful in strengthening the coordination role of the United Nations in the field of mine awareness, training, surveying, mine detection and clearance, scientific research for mine-detection and clearance technology and information on and distribution of medical equipment and supplies;

11. Calls upon Member States, especially those that have a capacity to do so, to provide the necessary information and technical and material assistance, as appropriate, and to locate, remove, destroy or otherwise render ineffective minefields, mines, booby-traps and other devices in accordance with international law;

12. Urges Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations that have the ability to do so, to provide, as appropriate, technological assistance to mine-inflicted countries and to promote scientific research and development on humanitarian mine-clearance techniques and technology so that mine-clearance activities may be carried out more effectively at lower costs and through safer means and to promote international collaboration in this regard;

13. Encourages Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations to continue to support ongoing activities to promote appropriate technology, as well as international operational and safety standards for humanitarian mine-clearance activities, including the early follow-up of the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology;

14. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session a report on the progress achieved on all relevant issues outlined in his previous reports to the Assembly on assistance in mine clearance and in the present resolution and on the operation of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance;

15. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance".